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U. S. Department of Agriculture
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Friday, September 3, 1937.

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Subject: "September's the Month for Pears." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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Have you ever put a bowl of pears on the buffet just to add a touch of color to the room? You have? Then you know that the fruit isn't ornamental very long. Not after the family sights it!

Daughter eats one; Junior eats two; Dad munches another, and you yourself just can't resist that luscious yellow one over on the west side of the bowl. Now you've all had your sample. Later in the day the procession files by the pear bowl again. You'll be lucky if you have even one lone pear for "looks" next day.

If pears disappear like that around your house, here's some good news for the whole family. There's a bumper crop of them this year. Or had you already guessed it? To be really mathematical about it, there'll be about 13 percent more pears produced this year than there were in 1936. That's the way crop estimators have it figured.

We're in the middle of the pear season right now. As early as mid-July, California Bartletts were packed and started on their way to the markets of the nation. The season for Bartletts will last until November, but it's during September that most pears are on the market.

By September you have your choice of many varieties. There'll be Bartletts, Kieffers, and Seckels. There'll be pears from the West Coast, from Michigan and New York. Then there'll be miscellaneous pears from around your own local community.

Which of the varieties will you buy? How will you preserve them -- or will you?

That, of course, is your problem. But perhaps I could give you a few facts I have found that might help you. You'll find that Bartletts and Kieffers are most popular for canning and that the little Seckel pears are just the right size for pickling.

Shopping for pears is a job that'll need your undivided attention. Remember that this fruit is picked green, stored, and allowed to ripen so that it will be ready when it reaches the market to which it is shipped.

If you buy pears for immediate consumption it's best to buy quite ripe ones in small quantities. But if you buy them to can it is better to get a little greener fruit. After the pear starts to ripen it soon starts to break down. Once it is completely ripe something must be done about it.

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If possible, get pears marked U. S. Number 1 or the more select pack U. S. Fancy. Naturally, these will be the most expensive. However, in the end they'll be a better value because there'll be less waste from spoilage.

But suppose you can't or don't care to buy these more expensive pears. Then you must watch closely. Look for shrivelled fruit, for fruit which shows signs of worm damage, or which looks as though it might have been picked up from the ground. Look for black splotches on the skin which may be the first sign of storage scald. Look for all these things -- then buy the pears which have none of them.

No, you're not through yet. Some perfectly nice looking pears are really not well underneath. The only way to detect decay or brownish breakdown which starts from the core is to have several pears cut lengthwise by the merchant.

Find the best pears you can and buy them. Then with all the Sherlock Holmes work out of the way, let's go home and make the most of the fruit that has stood these shopping tests.

How about some nice smooth pear jelly? Sorry! experts say that pears haven't sufficient pectin for jelly. But that's no tragedy. Did you ever taste pear preserves? If you have or if you haven't let's make some this fall. It's as simple as cooking eggs.

If you're going to use Kieffer pears for these preserves, let them ripen after harvest until they reach the stage at which they are yellow but still firm.

Now wash your pears, pare them and cut them into small uniform pieces. Core them. To each pound of prepared fruit add three quarters of a pound to 1 pound of sugar. Now you may either add water and cook the pears immediately or let alternate layers of pears and sugar sit all night and cook them in their own juice next day.

Suppose you cook them immediately. You'll need to add one quarter cup water to each pound of pears. And as I said before you'll add sugar in the proportion of three quarters to one pound of sugar to each pound of pears.

Carefully stir the mixture on the stove until it reaches the boiling point. Then, still stirring constantly, boil rapidly until the sirup is somewhat thick. Pack in sterilized jars and seal.

If you prefer to let the pears stand overnight, and it does give an added flavor, cook them in the same manner omitting the water. Just stir until they reach the boiling point then continue stirring until the sirup is somewhat thick.

Save some of the preserves and taste it right away -- on crackers with cream cheese.

After the family has had its fill of raw pears get out your recipe books and use your own thinking piece for new combinations. You'll find that pears served in fruit cups with acid fruits are delicious. But you figure it out for yourself. Remember, pear time comes but once a year and a bumper pear crop not even that often.

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